CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system comprising:

a plurality of server nodes communicatively coupled on a network to serve applications over the network to a plurality of clients;

a data object to store a hierarchical representation of configuration data associated with the server nodes, the data object having a root and a plurality of nodes branching from the root; and

a property sheet data structure logically positioned at one of the nodes, the property sheet data structure including a plurality of property names, a plurality of non-modifiable parameters and a plurality of modifiable parameters, wherein each respective property name included in the property sheet data structure is associated with a non-modifiable parameter and, optionally, a modifiable parameter.

2. The system as in claim 1 wherein the data object is stored within a central database accessible by each of the server nodes.

3. The system as in claim 1 further comprising:

a user interface to display contents of the property sheet data structure, the user interface to enable a user to modify a selected modifiable parameter associated with the property sheet data structure, wherein, once the selected modifiable parameter has been modified, the modified parameter is stored independently with respect to the non-modifiable parameters in the property sheet data structure.

4. The property sheet system of claim 3, wherein the non-modifiable parameters associated with the property sheet data structure are modifiable using an interface other than the user interface.

5. The property sheet system of claim 1, wherein the property sheet data structure is associated with a particular component or a set of components contained within a clustered system.

6. The property sheet system of claim 3, wherein the user interface comprises:

a first dialog box to display contents of the property sheet data structure, the first dialog box including a plurality of entry rows, each respective entry row of the first dialog box including a first column to display names of corresponding properties, a second column to display configuration parameters associated with corresponding properties and a third column to indicate if a configuration parameter displayed in the second column is a default parameter or a custom parameter; and

a second dialog box including a data entry field to enable a user to modify a selected custom parameter.

7. The property sheet system of claim 4, wherein a custom parameter associated with a property is modifiable by selecting the second dialog box of the corresponding property and entering a new parameter in the data entry field of the second dialog box.

8. The property sheet system of claim 7, wherein the second dialog box of the corresponding property is selected by clicking a custom check box inside the third column of a corresponding entry row.

9. The property sheet system of claim 8, wherein the second dialog box further includes a name field to display a name of a corresponding property and a default field to display a default configuration parameter associated with the corresponding property.

10. The property sheet system of claim 9, wherein the second dialog box further includes a data type field to display the data type associated with corresponding property.

11. A method comprising:

storing binaries and configuration data associated with a plurality of server nodes within a data object, the data object to store a hierarchical representation of configuration data associated with the server nodes, the data object having a root and a plurality of nodes branching from the root;

providing one or more property sheets at one or more of the nodes, each of the property sheets including a plurality of configuration parameters associated with the server nodes, each parameter associated with a name, a default parameter and optionally a custom parameter; and

updating the configuration of one of the server nodes by entering a custom configuration parameter in a property sheet associated with the server node.

12. The method as in claim 11 further comprising:

storing the data object, configuration data, binaries and property sheets within a central database, the central database accessible by the server nodes.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein updating comprises:

opening the property sheet in a property sheet graphical user interface, the graphical user interface comprising a first column for storing parameter names, a second column for storing a current parameter value and a third column for storing an indication as to whether the current parameter value is a custom value;

selecting the indication in the third column;

responsively generating a data entry window having a custom field for entering a custom value; and

entering a custom value in the custom field.

14. The method as in claim 11 wherein the

server nodes are Java server nodes supporting the Java 2 Enterprise Edition ("J2EE") standard and wherein the property sheet parameters comprise J2EE parameters.

15. A method for updating configuration settings for a plurality of server nodes comprising:

modifying configuration parameters within a property sheet, the configuration parameters associated with one or more server nodes within the plurality of server nodes;

storing the property sheet within a configuration hierarchy defined by a hierarchical configuration data object in a central database;

communicating an indication of the modification to one or more other server nodes;

identifying in the data object the modified configuration parameters within the property sheet and determining if the configuration data stored on the other server nodes is out-of-date; and

downloading the modified configuration data from the central database to the other server nodes if the configuration data stored on the other server nodes is out-of-date.

16. The method as in claim 15 further comprising:

acquiring a lock on the configuration parameters stored within the property sheet prior to modifying the configuration parameters at the first server node.

17. The method as in claim 16 further comprising:

releasing the lock on the configuration parameters after the configuration data has been updated at the central database and/or at each of the server nodes.

18. A system comprising:

server node means communicatively coupled on a network, the server node means to serve applications over the network to a plurality of clients;

hierarchical data object means to store a hierarchical representation of configuration data associated with the server nodes, the hierarchical data object means having a root and a plurality of nodes branching from the root; and

property sheet means logically positioned at one of the nodes, the property sheet means including a plurality of property names, a plurality of non-modifiable parameters and a plurality of modifiable parameters, wherein each

respective property name included in the property sheet means is associated with a non-modifiable parameter and, optionally, a modifiable parameter.

19. The system as in claim 18 wherein the hierarchical data object means is stored within a central database accessible by each of the server nodes.

20. The system as in claim 18 further comprising:

user interface means to display contents of the property sheet data structure, the user interface means to enable a user to modify a selected modifiable parameter associated with the property sheet means, wherein, once the selected modifiable parameter has been modified, the modified parameter is stored independently with respect to the non-modifiable parameters in the property sheet means.

21. The property sheet means of claim 20, wherein the non-modifiable parameters associated with the property sheet means are not user-modifiable via the user interface.

22. The property sheet system of claim 18, wherein the property sheet means is associated with a particular component or a set of components contained within the server node means.